



Fostering Effective Workforce Diversity Management in Nigerian Organizations: The Challenge of Human Resource Management

David M. Akinnusi¹, Olubukunola O. Sonubi², Adebukola E. Oyewunmi^{3*}

¹Department of Business Management, Industrial Relations and Human Resource Management Unit, College of Business and Social Sciences, Covenant University, Ota, Ogun, Nigeria, ²Vaal Triangle University of Technology, Department of Human Resource Management, Swaziland Campus, Swaziland, ³Department of Business Management, Industrial Relations and Human Resource Management Unit, College of Business and Social Sciences, Covenant University, Ota, Ogun, Nigeria.

*Email: adebukola.oyewunmi@covenantuniversity.edu.ng

ABSTRACT

The paper provides a conceptual understanding and significance of diversity and especially workplace diversity in Nigeria, drawing on previous studies. Naturally, the practice of human resource management (HRM) cannot be divorced from the socio-cultural, economic, political and legal environments of the nation. As the giant of Africa, with a population of about 180 million, about half of whom are of working age, Nigeria is an attractive market for multinationals from across the globe, and simultaneously fast becoming a melting pot of cultures and a nation where businesses should be booming but for the gross mismanagement, corruption and inept leadership. One of Nigeria's most critical challenges, therefore, is the effective management of its workforce diversity, a litmus test for the maturity of HRM. The role and the capacity of function HRM in managing workplace diversity in Nigeria is critically assessed and based on an integrated conceptual framework, the challenges of managing workplace diversity in Nigeria is discussed and future research directions are indicated.

Keywords: Human Resource Management, Workforce Diversity, Nigeria, Diversity Management

JEL Classification: M12

1. INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is arguably the giant of Africa in many respects. It is the most populous country with an estimated 180 million peoples, with multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multicultural diversities in addition to fauna and flora diversities, hills, rivers and climates. The vast country of about 923,768 km² is politically divided in 36 states and 774 local government councils. Regarding workforce diversity, about half of Nigeria's population is of working age, although the unemployment rate stands at 12.1% (Udo, 2016). The inter-mingling of local and foreign cultures through multinational operations and other effects of globalization, makes workforce diversity a resource and a challenge. With the neglect of the country's rich agricultural diversity and potentials, the country is dangerously perched on a mono-commodity of petrol and gas, which provides the nation of its gross domestic product and which plunges the country into economic turmoil each time the world prices of oil tumble. Educationally, the country has a diversity of

educational institutions from crèches to universities, the latter of which stand at 143, made of federal, state and private universities. The country is endowed with intellectuals of high quality, most of whom are in the diaspora due to the unfavorable conditions at home. All in all, we cannot but salute Nigeria's diversity.

The purpose of this paper is to provide a conceptual understanding and significance of diversity and especially workplace diversity in Nigeria, drawing on previous studies. The role and the capacity of human resource management function (HRM) in managing workplace diversity in Nigeria is assessed and based on an integrated conceptual framework, the challenges of managing workplace diversity in Nigeria is discussed and future research directions are indicated.

2. MEANING OF DIVERSITY

Diversity implies the variety, variegation and multiplicity of characteristics, both visible and invisible, which constitute

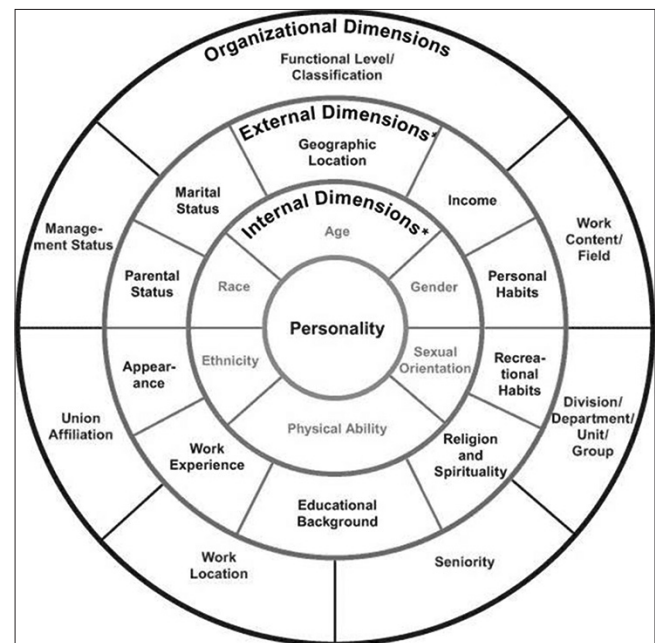
a phenomenon in both the inanimate and animate worlds. However, we are here concerned with workforce diversity which Kreitner and Kinichi (2001) defined as the multitude of the individual differences and similarities that exist among the people working in an organization. This implies that workforce diversity pertains to everybody in the organization. In other words, it pertains to the host of the individual differences and similarities that make all the workers in the organization unique and different from the others. These similarities and differences are in terms such as age, gender, marital status, social status, disability, sexual orientation, religion, personality, ethnicity, languages and culture (Kossek et al., 2006). Other aspects include life style, tenure, position in the organization, functional specialty or geographical location.

This is not an exhaustive list, as we can expect newer categories to be added to the list due to socio-economic, political and technological developments. Some of these categories have grown to include newer dimensions such as the child worker, the aged worker, generation X and Y, and knowledge workers are examples of emerging groups adding to the age dimension of diversity. As noted by Edewor and Aluko (2007), some researchers have gone further to define diversity in primary and secondary dimensions. Primary dimensions are age, ethnicity, gender, physical abilities/qualities, race and sexual orientation, which shape an individual's basic self-image and worldview and have the most impact on groups in the workplace and society (Loden and Rosener, 1991). The secondary dimensions include educational background, geographic location, income, marital status, religious beliefs and work experience. These secondary dimensions of diversity affect an individual's self-esteem and self-definition. Other ways of classifying these aspects are visible or surface aspects of diversity, pointing to those aspects which are either easily captured such as physical attributes and those that are invisible or deep-level diversity relating to psychological and cultural traits such as life styles, personality characteristics, etc.

Furthermore, the significance and importance attached to each or groups of these diversity dimensions vary from country to country and their effects may be conflicting. While gender inequality is considered the oldest and commonest diversity issue worldwide, religion is most important in India and the Middle East, multiculturalism, languages and religion in Africa, racial equality in USA and South Africa and sexual orientation in Western countries and the USA. Indeed, diversity in any many respects has the potential to generate multiple positive outcomes. However, this depends on factors such as the level of diversity awareness, sophistication, experience, education and emotional intelligence, which has been found to be a fundamental determinant of competency if the area of diversity management (Oyewunmi, 2016).

Finally, although much talked about and heavily researched especially in the western world, a comprehensive and generally accepted model of diversity is still elusive, but the one proposed by Shore et al. (2009) appears very promising. The nature of workforce diversity can be summarized by the diversity wheel in Figure 1.

Figure 1: The nature of workforce diversity



Source: Gardenswartz and Rowe (2003)

3. IMPORTANCE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF WORKFORCE DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT

A convergence of several factors such as the internationalization of business, development of world markets, growing workforce mobility, and the increasing awareness of individual differences have reduced the world to a global village, and each nation today is characterized more or less by a world society. Since organisations are microcosms of their societies, we now have a “diverse workforce comprising a multitude of beliefs, understandings, values, ways of viewing the world and unique information,” making it a “hot-button issue” in political, legal, corporate and educational arenas (Shen et al., 2009). However, there is a need to separate the facts from the myths. Quoting Rynes and Rosen (1995), Shen et al. (2009) noted that adoption of diversity training does not necessarily increase top management diversity and overall workforce diversity. In the same vein, they referred to the study by Blum et al. (1994), which found that companies with higher diversity tend to provide lower salaries and have higher employee turnover. On the other hand, to gain the full benefits of diversity management, the authors emphasize that it is not enough to “accept that individuals are different but creating an atmosphere of inclusion and making a commitment to valuing diversity” (Shen et al. 2009. p. 236; italicized for emphasis). In other words, diversity management must be made a strategic and competitive advantage and that the appropriate means to achieve this is through the HRM function: “The key to diversity management hinges on strategic thinking and people-centred policies. While diversity management is an approach that revolves around employees, the HRM function is the custodian of the people management processes.” While the authors spoke in glowing terms about HRM being critical in overcoming individual and group processes by increasing organizational learning, flexibility, knowledge creation and the development of a work environment which is

conductive to diversity management. They were convinced that diversity management has a place in HRM and should be at the heart of human resource practices and policies. Yet, in spite of their strong faith in this relationship, the empirical support was disappointing, mainly because of the limited scope of treating diversity management only as compliance with AA and EEO and neglecting the practices of appreciating and making use of diversity. It is, therefore, instructive, first, to examine the role and the ability of HRM as an organic function of management, on the one hand and, on the other hand, its ability to advance the process of diversity management in organizations in Nigeria.

4. THE DEVELOPMENT OF HRM IN NIGERIA

Glueck (1979) defined HRM as that function of all enterprises which provides for effective utilization of human resources to achieve both the objectives of the enterprise and the satisfaction and development of employees. This definition is selected over a plethora of others for its emphasis on the dual roles of HRM. Most other definitions have either been silent on the role of HRM in enhancing the needs fulfillment of employees or subordinating it to those of the enterprise. As known, neither of the two parties to the employment relationship can make the enterprise function and profitable by itself alone (Bendix, 1996). Writers (Orga and Ogbo, 2012; Fajana et al., 2011) on the nature of HRM in Nigeria are of the opinion that the profession is at its “infancy,” in spite of or probably because it is one of the first areas of management to be indigenized and, therefore, underdeveloped. However, it is our considered opinion that HRM, both as a practice and as a discipline, seems to have come of age, having survived the economic and political vicissitudes along its path of development. Apart from establishments operating in the informal sector, others in the formal sector, from small scale to multinational companies and from the local governments to state and federal governments, would either have the traditional “Personnel Department,” handling the basic administrative tasks of record keeping, hiring and firing and housekeeping or having modern, full-fledged HRM departments, headed by qualified HRM graduates or professionals, some of whom operate at board levels. The HRM set-up in the government sector, as accounted for by Nwanolue and Iwuoha (2012) appears to be geared for the 21st century bureaucracy. Also, the discipline of HRM is being offered at higher education sectors for some decades, with courses available at bachelors, postgraduate diploma, masters and Ph.D levels in several universities, both private and public. Moreover, the professional arm of HRM is vigorously propagating and building the image of the profession at different levels of membership in all the sectors of the economy. All in all, therefore, the discipline and practice of HRM cannot be said to be in its infancy but has attained full grown status. What may be lacking is the research and theoretical models in the field of HRM in Nigeria, hence its undue reliance on foreign theories and models (Fajana and Ige, 2009), a challenge which academics, the professional body and organisations must urgently address.

The presence of foreign nationals and cultures intermingling with the already multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and linguistic diversity for which Nigeria was originally known, makes the country as one of the world’s most diverse nations on the planet, next to

China and India. Fajana et al. (2011) believe the socio-cultural diversity of Nigeria has influenced the HRM practices in Nigeria. According to them, “Nigeria is characterized by over-reliance on culture, language, religion, gender and educational qualifications as a basis for determining who get employed.” Perhaps, not only that. One may add that anecdotal accounts abound that those who get promoted, trained and rewarded or punished are, to a large extent, determined by socio-cultural factors, glibly referred to as the “Nigerian Factor.” This is not a feature of all Nigerian organisations, as there are workplaces whose employees are governed by strict ethical principles. This situation is exacerbated by the fact that Nigeria is saddled with abundant unskilled labour but having a critical shortage of scarce skills, thus making talent management a major challenge (Fajana, 2009). Therefore, managing the nation’s human capital within the context of a profoundly diverse workforce, is considered next.

5. STUDIES ON WORKFORCE DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT IN NIGERIA

Given the nature of HRM in Nigeria, as described above, one area which needs the urgent attention of HRM is workforce diversity management. In the section which follows, the literature on diversity management in Nigeria is reviewed, with a view to raising salient issues relating to effective management of workforce diversity. The subject has attracted a wide range of attention ranging from academics, social critics, government functionaries and foreign writers (Issa, 2011; Bamgbade et al., 2014; Edewor and Aluko, 2007; Miebi, 2014). Their contributions have been marked by an acknowledgement of the importance of diversity, a critique of how the concept has been perceived and implemented and suggestions for mining this seemingly untapped resource.

The advantages and challenges of managing workforce diversity as mentioned by some Nigerian researchers are detailed in Table 1.

There is a consensus among the writers that Nigeria is a multicultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious country with about 250 different ethnic groups. This multi-cultural diversity is a feature of both private and public organisations in Nigeria. All the researchers agree, as encapsulated in the views of Issa (2011) that workforce diversity is strategic and can determine the success or failure of an organization or a nation if not handled properly. Theoretically, a well-managed workforce diversity system has enormous benefits at the organizational, group and individual levels, although researchers reviewed have not considered the non-work related benefits (Table 1). However, many of these benefits are yet to be empirically demonstrated in the Nigerian context.

6. RESPONSES TO WORKPLACE DIVERSITY IN NIGERIA

In the government sector, the management of diversity has been an integral part of the historical development of Nigeria as a nation, even in colonial times, when the colonialists considered it prudent to use indirect rule to manage the discrete entities joined together as Nigeria. After independence, Government agonized over the

Table 1: Advantages of managing workforce diversity in Nigeria

Author	Advantages
Bamgbade et al. (2014) cultural diversity management of construction firms in Abuja-Nigeria	New innovations, knowledge sharing, knowledge enhancement, team coherence, while the problems it generates are discrimination, conflicts, prejudice, bias, having both positive and negative effects on individuals, groups and organization
Ogbo et al. (2014) the effect of workforce diversity on organizational performance of selected firms in Nigeria	Workforce diversity has a positive effect on organizational performance
Ike and Eze (2013) diversity in the concept of management: Different style and difference ethics	Greater variety of solutions to problems; individual talents and experiences capitalized upon; A diverse collection of skills and experiences leads to quality service and customer satisfaction and loyalty, locally and globally; employees feel comfortable communicating varying points of view; provides a larger pool of ideas and experiences; inspire all employees to perform to their highest ability
Issa (2011) the meaning and interpretation of diversity management in Nigeria: A critical review	Brings a rich tapestry of experience, insights, backgrounds, and cultures; maintains a lively mix of agent activity; promotes innovation and divergent ideas. Too much similarity reduces the ability to adapt and learn; diversity opens up organizational boundaries to let in new views; produces useful ideas for solving the complex problems
Edewor and Aluko (2007) diversity management, challenges and opportunities in multicultural organizations	The full utilization of human resources; reduced interpersonal conflicts; enhanced work relationships based on mutual respect; a shared organizational vision and increased commitment among diverse employees; greater innovations, and flexibility; improved productivity
Fajana et al. (2011) age diversity and the future of the Nigerian workforce	Importance of a balanced workforce composition
Visagie and Linde (2010) evolving role and nature of workplace leaders and diversity: A theoretical and empirical approach	Leadership style influences the management of a diverse workforce

choice of the best form of government appropriate for the hugely multi-cultural country, also diverse in flora and fauna. It wanted to ensure that the nation's multi-cultural diversity does not constitute a cog in the wheel of national progress. The initial federal structure of government, considered by many as a reactive and defensive strategy for solving the cultural diversity of the nation, was based on the assumption that no region would be large enough to hold other regions to ransom, therefore opting to have a federal structure with a strong centre surrounded by weak regions. This arrangement led to an internecine race of who wins the centre, a situation which culminated in the collapse of the first republic and other subsequent attempts to keep Nigeria one, over which a bitter civil war was fought in the late sixties. The balkanization of the nation into what are now 36 states is a reaction to the centrifugal forces of diversity at work and, yet, the end is not in view.

The nation has also resorted to legislation to combat some of the glaring aberrations antithetical to diversity management, namely, discrimination and ethnic rivalry in Nigeria. This is addressed by Section 42 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as amended in 2011 which require that no citizen of a particular community, ethnic group, social origin, sex, religion or political opinion is discriminated against.

The Federal character clauses in the constitution sections 14 (3), section 147 (3), 171 (5) variously requires Government and its executive arm, the Foreign service and the armed forces to have a balanced representation of appointees from all the states of the federation in order to promote national unity and loyalty. The constitution goes further in section 147 (3) to make the appointment of Federal Ministers, Ambassadors, principal

officers in the military to conform to the Federal character, while section 219 called for the establishment of a body to ensure compliance with the Federal character principles. According to Ugwuzor (2014), Suberu (2001), the policy is praised by some as the "cornerstone of ethnic justice and fair government," while others blamed it for frustrated career expectations and condemned it as a discriminatory barriers or "geographical apartheid."

The Federal character commission enforces compliance with the Federal character principle, and establishes, monitors and enforces an equitable formula for the distribution of employment in the public services across the 36 states in the country. However, there are still allegations of nepotism and tribalism and as observed by Mustapha (2005), ethno-linguistic and regional identities remain strong in Nigeria as private sector bureaucracies in the media, bank, the formal sector economy, and even civil society, continue to manifest considerable ethnic bias with minimum effort at correcting the imbalances. It has been observed that a good policy is necessary but not sufficient to inhibit discriminatory and antisocial work behaviour but that a consistent enforcement of that policy is paramount (Jaja and Umezuke, 2005; Ugwuzor, 2014). Hence, there is the need for a strong organizational culture to mediate the negative impacts of diversity management strategies such as the Federal character principle.

Issa (2011) directed his criticism, among others, to the educational sector, where the falling standards of education were attributed to the quota system of admission that was in vogue. Before it was abrogated, the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board regulated admission to federal universities. The Board reserved 30% of a university's admissions for residents of its immediate 'catchment'

area, and a further 20% for the educationally disadvantaged. Some 10% of university admissions were made at the discretion of the Vice - Chancellor. Only 40% of students were admitted based on their academic performance. As argued by Issa (2011), although the quota - based admissions policy might have made university access more equitable, it did not necessarily support academic success for those admitted. As a result, although access has increased, university responsiveness to the needs and abilities of a more diverse student body that follows from rising enrolments was limited.

Similarly, the use of quota system in the appointment of lecturers and instructors in some higher education institutions were not based purely on qualifications but on where they came from and whose candidate they represented, resulting in the decline of academic standards and service delivery in the affected institutions. This again led to further agitation for representation in the affairs of the institution. Meanwhile, appointments and promotions to positions of responsibilities became politicized, with the management appointing their kinsmen and loyalists to positions of responsibilities such as head of departments and directors of institutes, thus compromising the standards of learning and service delivery (Issa, 2011).

In the private sector, issues of managing workforce diversity have not been as openly contested as in the government sector. The study by Edewor and Aluko (2007) argued that Nigerian organisations should pay more attention to managing the increasing multiculturalism of their organisations in order to reap the benefits of managing diversity. They recognized that the task of truly managing diversity requires “cultural transformation,” that is, involving “comprehensive managerial processes for developing an environment that works for all employees.” This perspective is in line with international literature and is also supported by other local writers (Issa, 2011). This requires developing a strong organizational culture that includes deep knowledge of the organizational policies and objectives and shared values and beliefs. Edewor and Aluko (2007) suggested a number of initiatives to address diversity management issues akin to HRM-inspired programmes of training, policy formulation, holding social event, monitoring and leadership by example.

Bamgbade et al. (2014) in a mixed method study of surveying 227 construction workers and interviewing 10 site supervisors and managers, found that the construction firms in Abuja have not really acquired the managerial skills needed to effectively manage the diverse workforce. There is no indication that workforce diversity management is regarded as a strategic aspect of their management and majority of the managers/supervisors have not formally undergone cultural diversity training and although few claimed to have, they all tend to rely on previous work experiences to guide them. Other findings of interest are the fact that Nigerians are truly a diverse race as different ethnic groups exhibit significantly different cultural traits unlike the stereotype of Africans, including Nigerian, as exhibiting high power distance cultures (Hofstede, 1991). The study has shown that while the Yoruba's in the study are predominantly high-power distance people, Hausas and Ibos are high on masculinity

and Igbo and Hausas are lowest and highest on individualism respectively. This emphasizes the need to carry out local investigations.

7. IMPLICATIONS OF MANAGING WORKFORCE DIVERSITY IN ORGANISATIONS IN NIGERIA

In their paper titled “diversity in organizations: Where are we now and where are we going?” Shore et al. (2009, p. 129) concluded as follows:

“At present, the diversity literature is as diverse as the individuals, groups and organizations that are the subjects of study. Much work is needed, both theoretically and empirically, to develop a body of knowledge related to diversity in organizations. Most importantly, scholars need to move beyond old paradigms and limited ways of thinking to develop integrative and practical diversity theories that help organizational leaders create systems in which diverse human beings are able to thrive, and to help their organizations do likewise.”

Even though this advice was given close to a decade ago, they are still very relevant to the Nigerian situation today. That much work is needed is borne out by the sparse research done, especially by way of empirical studies and theorizing. Considering the latter, Shore et al. (2009) see a theory as a way of seeing just as it is also a way of not seeing, following Pedhazur and Schmelkin (1991); hence they called for more integrative theories to guide both research and practice. Their final theoretical model is based on a careful and extensive review of the literature, looking at key individual dimensions of diversity (race, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, and national origin), the paradigms applied, their antecedents and outcomes (positive, negative and neutral) for individuals, groups and organizations.

Although the findings of Shore et al. (2009) cannot be generalized to other non-western countries, some of their remarks are instructive to researchers in other places. For example, it is appropriate to note that most researchers in Nigeria have tended to concentrate on limited aspects of diversity, namely, race (ethnicity), gender and culture (national origin), to the neglect of other dimensions such as age, disability and sexual orientation and more of surface than deep-level characteristics of diversity.

A comment applicable to both western and non-western researchers is that individual level of theorizing, is usually dominated by negative rather positive predictions, calling for newer thinking about the positive aspects of diversity. They, therefore, advocate the use of a wide array of old as well as developing new theories across the social sciences to explain diversity phenomena in order to enrich the body of scholarship. Moreover, they also recommend the use of multiple dimensions of diversity in group and organizational level studies to enable research to explore what dimensions of diversity are most valuable for group and organizational effectiveness (Shore et al., 2009). Furthermore, they advocate methodological diversity in the exploration of

diversity issues as this may aid in the development of new diversity paradigms and new insights, leading to the better management of diversity issues.

Finally, they felt that the field of diversity would benefit from an appreciative inquiry perspective (Cooperrider et al., 2005) rather than the present pessimism and negativism which characterize research approaches to diversity. Diversity, because of its negative historical connotation, has acquired an odium which prevents managers and researchers from appreciating and valuing diversity in a positive way. However, there is some evidence to suggest that positive attitudes toward diverse others increase the likelihood of successful diversity management (Sawyer et al., 2005). Researchers have already begun to develop ideas that move in a more proactive and positive direction such as diversity climate and inclusiveness (McKay et al., 2007; Janssens and Zazoni, 2007; Roberson, 2006; Shore et al., 2009), therefore, provoking newer directions that can contribute to the ability of employers of diverse people to promote individual, group, and organizational success.

8. RESEARCH AND MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

Figure 2 presents an integrated model for research into and the dynamic management of workforce diversity. It is an integration of the ideas from two major theoretical frameworks, one by Shore et al. (2009) and the other Shen et al. (2009). The former comes from a research perspective and the latter from a management perspective, each of which complements the other. This model is considered useful and applicable to the Nigerian environment because it makes no cultural assumptions and their concepts can be operationalized to meet the demands of specific environments. It is comprehensive and considers both the research and practical implications of workforce diversity management, looking at the antecedent, process and outcomes of diversity management and the role of the HRM in fostering workplace diversity management.

From both research and management perspectives, workforce diversity is influenced by many contexts both outside the organization and inside the organization that may influence the prevalence and impact of diversity. Some external aspects of context based on research findings are the national culture, occupation, industry, legal context, economy (e.g., labor market) and family and community in which the organization and its employees are embedded. Each of these aspects of the context may have separable effects with broad (e.g., the economy) or narrow (e.g., the employee's family) implications for individuals, groups, and organizations.

Likewise, internal organizational contextual effects include organizational culture, strategy, and human resource practices (Kochan et al., 2003). In addition, depending on the size of the organization, there may be many different groups and individuals that determine the extent to which the workforce is diverse, and whether diversity has positive, negative, or neutral effects. It is advisable to include only the contexts appropriate to one's study

and also to be consistent with operationalizing the constructs to avoid confusing results. Studies can be conducted at individual, group and organizational levels or across levels, if carefully planned.

This framework is appropriate in environments in which large companies operate and are able to draw diverse peoples whose salaries and spending stimulate developments in their adjoining communities. There are double-headed arrows between the two types of outcomes (work and non-work) and the organization to signify potential influences from the organization to outcomes, and from outcomes to the organization.

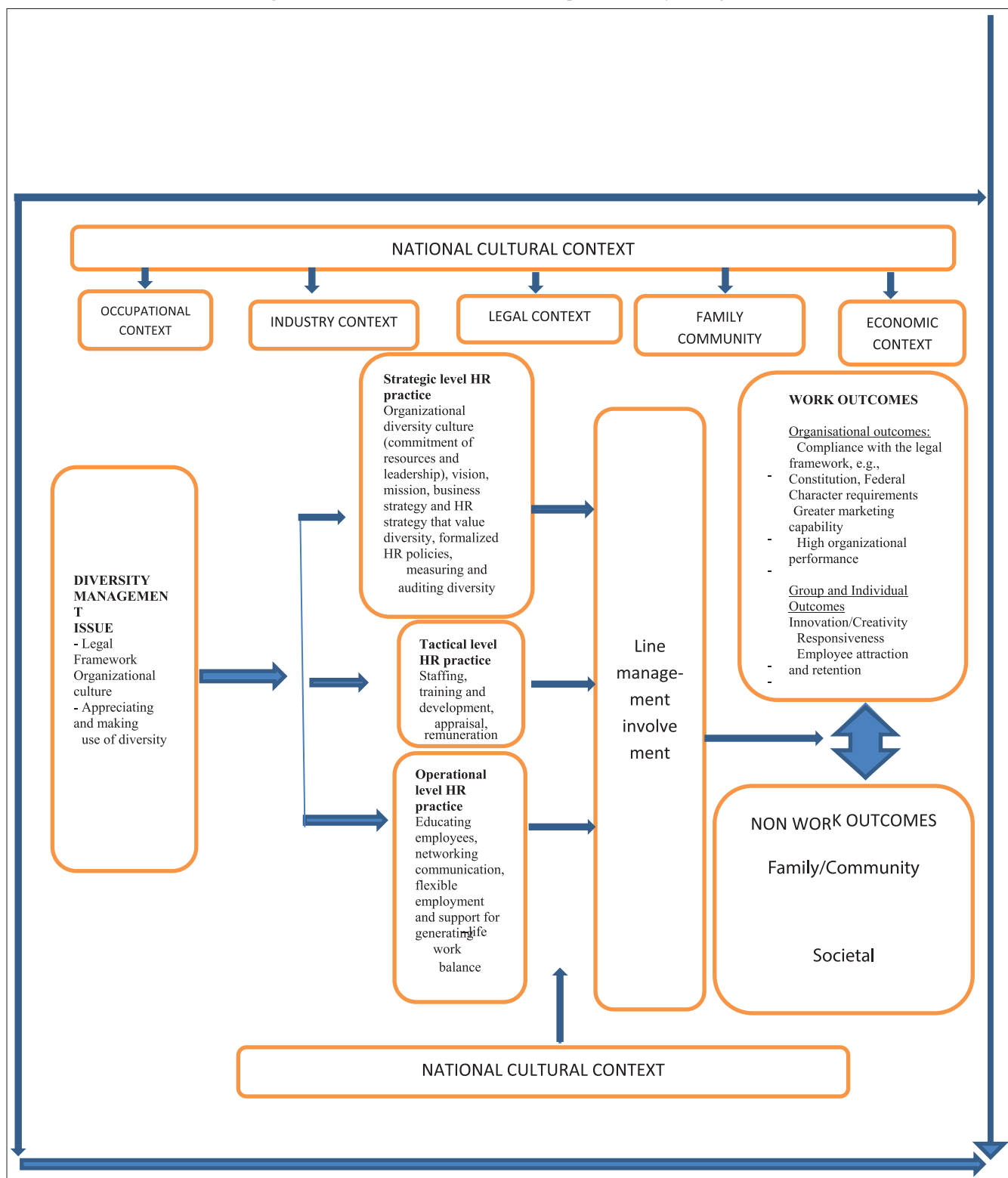
The model in Figure 2 also includes other types of important outcomes which Shore et al. (2009) considered as understudied in the workplace diversity literature, including family and community outcomes and societal outcomes. For example, opportunities for diverse people may enhance communities through both economic and social enrichment. Societies may also change as the result of increased contact among diverse people provided in work settings and associated learning opportunities.

The contributions of Shen et al. (2009) to the model relates to the system of implementing workforce diversity issues through a HRM perspective, a task which, according to them, has not been well handled by HR over the years. The authors suggested paying attention to both the legal as well as the managerial process of appreciating and making use of diversity at the strategic, tactical and operational levels (Figure 2), functions which are at the heart of the HRM function.

To achieve all the outcomes of diversity as indicated in Figure 2 requires making diversity management a strategic issue by infusing it in the vision, mission, strategy and structure of the organization and developing a set of core values and policies, of which the respect for individual differences and similarities, where valuing and using differences to advantage are given prominence, and are widely communicated and used to drive the achievement of diversity objectives at the individual, group and organizational levels, with proper monitoring and evaluation programmes.

The role of implementing workforce diversity management should be driven by the HRM department with the appointment of a high calibre manager as the chief diversity executive responsible for all diversity issues of the organization. Such a unit should be well staffed and resourced and given the latitude to manage diversity throughout the organization. Qualities expected of the office holder include being grounded in organizational development/HRM disciplines, open and ethically minded, fair and firm, among others.

All managers and leaders in the organization are themselves human resource managers and must be held accountable for the success of diversity programmes. As line managers, they act as coaches, mentors, leaders and talent managers and are, therefore, required to exhibit diversity-oriented values and practices, etc. The importance of investing in training and capacity

Figure 2: A framework of HR-driven workplace diversity management

Source: Adapted from Shore et al. (2009) and Shen et al. (2009)

building in the areas of diversity consciousness and emotional intelligence, particularly the latter, cannot be over-emphasized. Emotionally intelligent individuals are more socially aware and less likely to commit social blunders with respect to the diversity dimensions, i.e., age, gender, religion disability, ethnicity and so

on Oyewunmi, Ojo and Oludayo (2015). Training in diversity awareness and emotional intelligence will empower managers to maximize the inherent potentials of the diverse workforce, whilst fostering an inclusive environment that appreciates and respects individual differences.

9. INSTITUTIONALISING DIVERSITY STUDIES

The subject of workforce diversity management is important and significant at governmental, organizational and community levels to command making it a national coordinated issue. It should permeate all our educational systems from primary to the university, where students are exposed to the values of appreciating human diversity in all its forms, knowing that it is a blessing rather than a curse that “tongues” may differ, but we thrive in unity in diversity as our national anthem indicates. The subject of diversity should be embedded in all subjects taught at all educational institutions. Research institutes and centres should be set up by government, private organisations and universities to deal with diversity issues in totality, as in many countries, for the propagation of diversity agenda. Examples of such abound around the globe, but as diversity issues are context-based, Nigerian outfits are desirable to drive the urgent research into the effects of different socio-cultural environments on diversity management. In these and other ways, the subject of diversity and, in particular, workforce diversity would be adequately addressed. Also, the role of HRM function in advancing workplace diversity, leading to organizational performance is an urgently needed research agenda, to ascertain the maturity or otherwise of the HRM function in the Nigerian context. Finally, studies statistically examining the contribution of diversity management in HR to organizational performance from financial and non-financial perspectives are needed in Nigeria as elsewhere.

10. CONCLUSIONS

The Government of Buhari set off, among other things, to investigate other sources of non-oil based revenue to bolster and sustain the Nigerian economy. A veritable source of ideas, creativity, innovation and dynamism which can be mined ad infinitum, lies in the workforce diversity of the nation’s organisations, private and public, small or large. In this era of trying to escape the economic doldrums in which Nigeria is currently going through, the country should turn to its organisations to harness the synergy and creativity inherent in its multicultural workforce. The good thing about this is that there is no competition in this regard, as each organization can devise its own strategies, but there is wisdom in learning from each other. This paper proposes a modest strategy, welcomes and encourages other perspectives.

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